

Amendments to the Specification:

The paragraph starting at page 1, line 13, is amended and now reads as follows:

-- A method of the above kind is disclosed, for example, in United States Patent 6,226,576. In this patent, a method for monitoring and fault detection is described. Here, one distinguishes between such diagnostic functions which run through during the normal operation of the engine and monitor the function of a component and such diagnostic ~~function~~ functions which actively ~~influences~~ influence a component and so determine the operability thereof. --

The paragraph starting at page 5, line 10, is amended and now reads as follows:

-- It is also suggested that, in the central function, an execution of the diagnostic function and a change of the second count value ~~[[is]]~~ are blocked by a common functionality when a component, which is required for achieving a purposeful diagnostic result, is defective. In this way, the case is considered that a diagnostic function can be executed but supplies possibly an incorrect result because a component, for example, a sensor, whose signal is to be evaluated by the diagnostic function, is defective. When such a case is present, the actual result with respect to the executability of the diagnostic function is "frozen" by the method of the invention.

Furthermore, the actual execution of the diagnostic function is blocked in order to avoid false fault diagnosis results. Both are made possible by a common functionality, for example, a block bit. The corresponding interface continues therefore to remain narrow. --

The paragraph starting at page 5, line 26, is amended and now reads as follows:

-- According to another embodiment of the method of the invention, a third count value is determined in the central function which is based on the number of the specific operating conditions which have actually been present. The third count value is therefore not blocked in a defective component; instead, the count value is incremented each time when the specific operating conditions have been present. In this way, it can be determined from a comparison of the second count value to the third count value that the execution of the diagnostic function and the incrementing of the second count value ~~[[was]]~~ were blocked because of a defective component. According to the invention, these functions are likewise made available in the central function so that the question as to which diagnostic functions are checked for the specific engine as to their running capability can continue to be very flexibly handled. --

The paragraph starting at page 7, line 7, is amended and now reads as follows:

-- An essential background for the check of the running capability of a diagnostic function is the requirement that the result of the check can be read out from an external inquiry apparatus. This is taken into account in that, when an external inquiry apparatus is connected, the central function outputs that quotient from the particular first and second count values of a plurality of diagnostic functions which ~~quotient~~ exhibits the lowest ~~value~~ value, and the quotient and an information ~~[[is]]~~ are transmitted to the external inquiry apparatus. From this information, it is evident which diagnostic function the quotient is assigned to. The determination of the quotient normally takes place continuously in order to always have the same available, however, this takes place in a slow computation raster. --

The paragraph starting at page 20, line 2, is amended and now reads as follows:

-- A method for operating an internal combustion engine ~~including such as~~ an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle is disclosed. The method includes the steps of: checking the operability of at least one component by a diagnostic function (D); causing the diagnostic function (D) to transmit data (CB) ~~[[,]]~~ that the diagnostic function (D) could have found a fault ~~[[,]]~~ to a central function (CF) in a format uniform for all diagnostic functions (D); and, causing the central function (CF) to process the data (CB). --